



**African Children's Choir**  
**UNDER ONE SKY AUSTRALIA TOUR 2015**  
**SUMMARY REPORT**

The African Children's Choir (ACC) Under One Sky 2015 tour has been a resounding success on many levels.

The national tour consisted of 21 concerts and 18 workshops in metropolitan and regional areas from Geelong to Brisbane from 4 April to 29 June, raising a **profit** of approx. AUD\$130.000. Nineteen out of the 21 concerts were sold out with the workshops being extremely well attended.

As well as forming new relationships with local communities, we also established some valuable associations with high-level dignitaries including HE Enoch Nkuruho (the High Commissioner of Uganda) and officials from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra.

One of the main objectives in ACC/KwaYa tours is a quality and grass roots cultural exchange with local school kids and communities.

Local schools and community choirs hosted the majority of concerts. The performance speaks for itself with audience members invariably exiting in tears of joy.

**Verbal comments received after the concerts**

*"That is the best choir in the world!"*

*"That is the most wonderful performance I have ever seen a choir perform."*

*"I so did not expect something like that! I am blown away!"*

*"I don't know whether to scream, sing laugh or cry. That was amazing!"*

Listening to the blending of the children's voices is an exquisite experience. The show is dynamic, professional, touching and informative. It is a unique show tailored to Australian audiences that remains etched in the minds of all who have the privilege of seeing it.

In some areas we would like to increase the capacity of the venues so we can increase our audience attendance levels. It seems in certain areas we can fill venues of 700 to 1000 people.

The African Children's Choir is becoming known in Australia as a world class-performing choir that also provides unique and exceptional cultural exchange opportunities for the public and school students.

**Media and marketing**

We received a phenomenal response from the Australian media with massive coverage by TV, radio and newspapers in each area we visited.

The 'hook' that the media loved was the idea that one of their local schools/choirs engaged in a cultural exchange with 18 underprivileged kids from Uganda. People like to read about what others in their community are doing; they loved the fact that the ACC was mixing and interacting with people in their local community.

Five thousand concert tour magazines were distributed to enthusiastic audiences at concerts and workshops. These included stories about KwaYa Australia's involvement with the African Children's Choir as well as ongoing projects in Uganda and Australia by KwaYa members.

We will continue to vigorously promote the cultural exchange aspect of ACC tours to Australia in the media, including the **Young Africans tour in April-June 2016**; the 'job-shadowing' feature of next year's tour is a unique initiative designed to give Ugandan school graduates the opportunity to learn job skills and experience with their Australian hosts. Details of the 2016 tour will be confirmed by the end of 2015.

### **Tour bus**

KwaYa was fortunate to receive a \$35,000 grant (Gambling Community Benefits Fund) in October 2014 to buy a bus to transport KwaYa projects to locations and venues to conduct cultural exchange workshops in Australia. This bus was used to transport the African Children's Choir during its three-month tour along Australia's east coast in 2015.

Volunteers are giving the bus a mechanical overhaul and will fit shelving in preparation for next year's Young Africans tour.

Once the Young African's concert name is confirmed, we will order magnets to cover The African Children's Choir logos on the bus.

### **Marsha Gusti**

President

KwaYa Australia Inc

### **Our Australian tour hosts in 2015**

<b>Tour itinerary</b>		<b>Hosted by</b>
<b>Victoria</b>		
6 - 11 April	Queenscliff	Cottage by the Sea
12 - 23 April	Melbourne and surrounds	Goonawarra Primary School Bendigo South East College
24 - 27 April	Albury	Trinity College
<b>ACT</b>		
28 April - 3 May	Canberra	Canberra Grammar School
<b>NSW</b>		
4 - 7 May	Huskisson	Raised Voices Choir
8 - 14 May	Sydney	Our Lady of Fatima Primary School Inaburra School
15 - 17 May	Wollongong	TOPS Conference Centre
18 - 24 May	Blue Mountains	Crowd Around Choir
25 May - 2 June	Taree/Laurieton/Port Macquarie	St Joseph's Taree St Joseph's Laurieton St Joseph's Regional College
3 - 8 June	Bellingen	Brian Martin Music Vox16 Performance Choir
<b>QLD</b>		
9 - 15 June	Gold Coast/Byron Bay	Song Dynasty Music Twin Towns Clubs & Resorts
16 - 27 June	Sunshine Coast	Cool Harmonies choir

## **African Children's Choir Australia Tour 2015 - Media coverage**

Social media: <https://www.facebook.com/underoneskytour2015>

### **TV**

*SBS* [www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/05/14/songs-hope-ugandan-kids-tour-australia](http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2015/05/14/songs-hope-ugandan-kids-tour-australia)

*NBN News* [www.nbnnews.com.au/2015/06/11/african-childrens-choir-spread-hope-at-tweed-heads/](http://www.nbnnews.com.au/2015/06/11/african-childrens-choir-spread-hope-at-tweed-heads/)

*WIN News Sunshine Coast* [www.facebook.com/WINNewsSunshineCoast/videos/1000237093343067/](https://www.facebook.com/WINNewsSunshineCoast/videos/1000237093343067/)

*Pulse TV Geelong* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYXo9ZVQJaw>

### **ABC Radio**

*ABC Canberra* [www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-01/african-childrens-choir-perform-collingwood-football-club-song/6437034](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-01/african-childrens-choir-perform-collingwood-football-club-song/6437034)

*ABC Mid North Coast*  
[www.facebook.com/abcmidnorthcoast/photos/a.639452779443195.1073741847.118452998209845/844685682253236/?type=1](https://www.facebook.com/abcmidnorthcoast/photos/a.639452779443195.1073741847.118452998209845/844685682253236/?type=1)

*ABC North Coast* [www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2015/06/11/4252854.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2015/06/11/4252854.htm)

*ABC Coast FM* [www.facebook.com/underoneskytour2015/posts/338237283029243](https://www.facebook.com/underoneskytour2015/posts/338237283029243)

### **Newspapers**

*Sydney Morning Herald*

[www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/african-childrens-choir-return-to-australia-for-massed-choir-spectacular-20150513-gh0wco.html](http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/african-childrens-choir-return-to-australia-for-massed-choir-spectacular-20150513-gh0wco.html)

*Illawarra Mercury*

[www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/3084029/under-one-sky-choir-spectacular-photos/](http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/3084029/under-one-sky-choir-spectacular-photos/)  
[www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/3074251/songs-and-celebration-of-africa/](http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/3074251/songs-and-celebration-of-africa/)

*South Coast Register*

[www.southcoastregister.com.au/story/3039317/out-of-africa/](http://www.southcoastregister.com.au/story/3039317/out-of-africa/)

*SC Daily newspaper*

[www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/photos/african-choir/32091/#/0](http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/photos/african-choir/32091/#/0)  
[www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/song-in-the-heart-and-a-tear-in-the-eye/2679478/](http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/song-in-the-heart-and-a-tear-in-the-eye/2679478/)  
[www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/african-choir-sing-in-coolum/2677268/](http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/news/african-choir-sing-in-coolum/2677268/)

### **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra**

<http://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/public-diplomacy/programs-activities/Pages/from-westminster-abbey-to-the-rg-casey-building-the-african-childrens-choir-visits-dfat.aspx>

*Blank Gold Coast* <http://blankgc.com.au/african-childrens-choir-comes-to-twin-towns/>

*My Sunshine Coast* <http://mysunshinecoast.com.au/events/events-display/african-childrens-choir--under-one-sky-concert,53747,73527>

# Geelong NEWS

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

[www.geelongnews.com.au](http://www.geelongnews.com.au)



## OUT OF AFRICA

The celebrated African Children's Choir will bring its captivating and uplifting show to the South Barwon Civic Centre in Belmont on Friday night - DETAILS, Page 3



A few years ago Marsha Gusti had an epiphany. She was walking along the headland at Burleigh Hill on the Gold Coast when something told her she should go to Africa.

The community leader and advocate was already working with indigenous groups in Australia and was part of a local choir. She realised how much choirs were able to benefit people of diverse backgrounds in coming together.

She googled choirs in Africa, and discovered the African Children's Choir. She contacted them and asked if she might be able to come over to help.

Through her charity, Kwaya, she and 35 others travelled to Uganda, where they worked in impoverished communities, hosting workshops, doing renovations and providing meals, as well as performing a concert with the African Children's Choir. It was an experience that changed her life.

Since then, Kwaya has visited Uganda three more times and plan a fifth visit in September, where they will be joined by Kate Miller-Heidke as musical director.

Now Gusti is delighted to bring the choir to Australia. The African Children's Choir, made up of children who have lost one or both parents, travel the world bringing their joyous song and music to others. Over the past 30 years, the organisation has assisted around 52,000 children.

"The kids who are involved in the choir, they go back to Uganda and are enrolled in the African Children's Choir primary school, and are educated right through to university level paid for by sponsorships," says Gusti.

"They've had lawyers, they've had doctors, they've had pop singers and

A walk by the beach at Burleigh has led to the African Children's Choir bringing their songs of hope all the way to Australia, writes **Sally Browne**



**FULL OF JOY:** The African Children's Choir will perform across Queensland in land.

IT engineers come out the other end. They also go back to their communities and assist."

From this month, 18 children, aged from eight to eleven, will travel Australia for three months, from southern Victoria to the Sunshine Coast.

Local communities are also invited to get involved. The performances will be supported by local choirs and schools have been invited to participate in a Hands on the Bus project, where they may add their handprints to the bus the children are travelling in.

"Our tour is called *Under One Sky*

and the local kids make posters about what *Under One Sky* means to them," says Gusti. "Then the competition winners get to add their handprints to the bus."

Being part of the choir is a transformative experience for the kids involved – and their enthusiasm and exuberance is passed on to the audiences.

"It's pretty amazing for them and for us. They have a lovely time on tour; they learn a lot about the West; they learn a lot of confidence," says Gusti.

"They come from dire circum-

stances. One of the girls, when she was asked what was the best part about touring, said it was getting three meals a day.

"They face a life of no education. Education is not free. So if you don't have money to pay for food then you don't have money to pay for school. They end up in the fields planting crops if they're lucky but a lot of them are just fighting for everyday survival. There are more than three million orphans on the streets of Uganda at the moment."

So far, Kwaya has raised \$310,000 for the African Children's Choir. On

one of their visits, they were joined by Choir of Hard Knocks leader Jonathan Welsh, who documented the experience in a film premiering in Melbourne this month.

"Community choir singers, I believe, have a big heart and that hasn't been harnessed yet, in as far as being able to give back."

Gusti understands how music and being part of a community can lift the spirits when dealing with trauma and grief. She lost her son when he was 25 years old and a one week-old grandson.

"There's a sharing that takes place when you sing with other people. Your heart beats all start to synchronise. Another beautiful thing that singing does to groups, it breaks away barriers and any divides in society."

The joy expressed by the kids from African Children's Choir is infectious, says Gusti. And when visiting their country, its Westerners who have a lot to learn rather than the other way around.

"What I've experienced with the kids on tour is that they come from such dire circumstances but they walk around with a joy in their heart and a smile on their face that we don't have.

"Everyone is so touched by their exuberance, their enthusiasm, their happiness and their hope for the future. For us, here, goodness gracious me, if we don't get the right flat screen TV we start sulking and getting upset. So, there's something to learn."

"I went over to Uganda thinking we had everything and we were going to help them out, but what I actually realised was, while I've got a billion times more than what they have physically, they have a joy in their heart that they share with the audience."

**The African Children's Choir perform at various locations across Queensland, June 9-29, [kwaya.org](http://kwaya.org)**



# On song to bring joy to the world

**Ugandan children overcome adversity to share their music, writes Sally Browne**

**T**he children of the African Children's Choir have had a tough time in life, but they travel the world bringing joyous music to others.

Marsha Gusti, who has brought the choir to Australia for an epic three-month tour, says it is made up of children, aged from eight to 11, who have lost one or both parents.

"They come from dire circumstances," Gusti says. "One of the girls, when she was asked what was the best part about touring, said it was getting three meals a day."

Being part of the choir is a transformative experience for the kids involved – and their

enthusiasm and exuberance is passed on to the audiences.

"The kids involved in the choir...are enrolled in the African Children's Choir primary school, and are educated right through to university level, paid for by sponsorships," Gusti says.

"They've had lawyers, they've had doctors, they've had pop singers and IT engineers come out the other end. They also go back to their communities and assist."

During the tour, which will take the choir all over Sydney,



music  
**THE AFRICAN CHILDREN'S CHOIR**

The African Children's Choir are on a three-month Australian tour.

Canberra and regional NSW in May and June, local communities are encouraged to get involved. Community choirs will support the performances and schools have been invited to participate in a Hands On

The Bus project, where they have a chance to add their handprints to the bus the children are travelling in.

"Our tour is called Under One Sky and the kids make posters about what Under One Sky means to them," says

Gusti. "Then the competition winners get to add their handprints to the bus."

Gusti's charity, Kwaya, has raised more than \$300,000 for the choir and she hopes the tour will help bring in more funds for needy kids.

"There are more than three million orphans on the streets of Uganda at the moment," she says. "They face a life of no education. Education is not free. So if you don't have money to pay for food then you don't have money to pay for school. They end up in the fields planting crops if they're lucky but a lot of them are just fighting for everyday survival."

Having been involved in community choirs herself, Gusti is confident the African Children's Choir will find generous audiences here.

"Community choir singers, I believe, have a big heart and that hasn't been harnessed yet, in as far as being able to give back."

• **The African Children's Choir, various locations across Sydney, NSW and the ACT in May and June, various prices, see [africanchildrenchoir.com](http://africanchildrenchoir.com)**

April 25, 2015 **Daily Telegraph**